Revelation 4–7: God's Throne, the Lamb, and the Seven Seals
2024 Winter Series | Galena church of Christ

Introduction

Chapter 4

4:1, "come and see" is a typical apocalyptic invitation for someone to come and see behind the scenes.

Connections to surrounding context:

- Door, 3:20; 4:1

- Throne, 21x: 3:21 (2x); 4:2 (2x), 3, 4 (3x), 5 (2x), 6 (3x), 9, 10 (2x); 5:1, 6, 7, 11, 13

  o 3:21, the throne = Jesus coming to God and sitting down at his right-hand

  o 3:21, the throne = Jesus is victorious (theme of the entire book), with victory in the cross

Connections to OT, ANE, and Greco-Roman 1st century world:

- Call of a prophet in the divine council/throne-room scene: Jeremiah 23:18, 21–22; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1–2; Daniel 7 (cf. 1 Corinthians 12)

- Appearance of God: Exodus 24:9–11; 1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6; Psalm 97—these are often in the context of judgment coming upon either Israel/Judah or the nations and contrasted with helpless gods or idols.

- Cherubim/seraphim: Psalm 80:1; 99:1; many thrones had statutes or moldings of creatures that were a mix of a lion, an eagle, an ox/bull, and a human (remember kings are connected to G/god[s] in ANE and Greco-Roman 1st century world), the difference is that while the earthly kings had semblances of these creatures, God was actually in the midst of these creatures who call out his praises.

Point: God is in control. Before getting to anything about the enemy of God's people, this point is made. Second Temple Jewish literature included ideas that God had withdrawn himself from his people; cf. Isaiah 59:1–2. God is not withdrawn but is very much present and in control. Therefore, worship him!

Chapter 5

Introduced to a scroll/book that is sealed with seven seals (to be opened in chapter 6). There are several possible meanings to the scroll/book; perhaps it is the Greco-Roman practice of writing one's will, witnessed by seven witnesses, sealed, and only after the executor of the will could break the seals.

Who is worthy?

- The Lion of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 11:1).

- The Lion = the slain Lamb (cf. Philippians 2:8ff; Hebrews 1:9) who is victorious by his death.

- Standing in the midst/center of the throne and elders = place where God was = the Lamb is God.

- Seven = complete; horn = power (Deuteronomy 33:17; Psalm 89:17; Daniel 7); eyes = omniscience.

- Worshiped in song, with words like God in chapter 4; cf. Exodus 15; Deuteronomy 32; Judges 5; Psalm 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; etc.

- Worshiped by four creatures, the 24 elders, millions of angels, and every creature in the universe.

Connections to OT, ANE, and Greco-Roman 1st century world:

- Lions used as symbols of power in ANE and Greco-Roman world.

- Hymns, Revelation 4 absent from other apocalyptic literature, but common in Greco-Roman literature in the context of the king being praised and worshiped.

Chapter 6

The scroll/book is opened, seal by seal. Probably not chronological but rather as a painting on a canvas.

OT background: 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 8:1 (famine from God); Amos 4:6–11; Zechariah 1:8–15; 6:1–8; Ezekiel 14:12ff; Leviticus 26:18–28 (four punishments)

Seal 1: vv1–2, white horse and rider with crown and bow (made to look like Jesus) = some say Jesus and victory, probably deceiving spirit (cf. 1 Kings 22:21ff; Zechariah 6:5; Revelation 12–13 where satanic imitates the divine; Matthew 24:4–9 where four things are mentioned and first is a false Christ).

Seal 2: vv3–4, red horse (blood) and rider = war and adversaries.

Seal 3: vv5–6, black horse (despair) and rider = famine; wheat and barley at outrageous prices, but oil and wine remain untouched (partial despair/famine).

Seal 4: vv7–8, pale horse and rider, Death, followed by Hades = death; only 1/4 killed, so partial (cf. Ezekiel 5:1, 12, 16ff).

These first four all have horses, all involve deceit and destruction of some sort, but only partial. God is trying to get their attention, giving them an opportunity to repent before bringing complete destruction.

Chapter 7

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Conclusion and Applications

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